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the WORLD ALLIANCE for INTERNATIONAL FRIENDSHIP THROUGH THE CHURCHES
the WORLD ALLIANCE of YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATIONS
the WORLD'S YOUNG WOMEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION
the WORLD'S STUDENT CHRISTIAN FEDERATION
the WORLD'S SUNDAY SCHOOL ASSOCIATION

The aim of the Ecumenical Press Service is to keep its readers informed of trends of thought and opinion in and about the Churches and Christian movements. It is therefore not to be held responsible for opinions expressed in its news items.

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NETHERLANDS

Towards a New Church Order

In its first Synod after the war the Netherlands Reformed Church decided to prepare a new church order which would reflect the new understanding of the nature and task of the Church gained during the years of struggle. The commission which was appointed to elaborate this new church order has now completed its task. Its unanimous report was presented to the General Synod in the course of a special service in the cathedral of Utrecht on November 24.

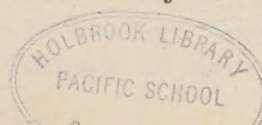
The commission proposes that the Church should return to the presbyterian-synodical type of church order. The three ministries would be those of ministres, of elders and of deacons. Each of these ministries would be subdivided. Thus the ministres may be either pastors, missionaries or evangelists. In this manner, and also through the organisation of a number of special Councils for different functions, the new order would give the Church that flexibility which it needs to fulfil its evangelistic task in the modern world.

The confessional position of the Church is described as follows:
"In grateful obedience to the Holy Scripture as the source of its witness and as the rule of faith the whole Church witnesses to the revelation of the triune God - in communion with the confession of the fathers and aware of its responsibility for its present task."

This is perhaps the first church order which refers explicitly to the World Council of Churches. One of the articles on relations with other Churches states that members of foreign Churches which are members of the World Council of Churches can be registered as "guests", in which case they can participate in the Sacraments and receive pastoral care. Again ministers sent to Holland by member Churches of the World Council may be related to the Netherlands Reformed Church.

The projected church order will be studied by the whole Church and finally be submitted to a "double" Synod.

E.P.S. Geneva



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UNITED STATESChristian Help to the Lepers

At the annual convention of the American Mission to Lepers meeting in New York City on October 16-17, Dr R.C. Williams, assistant surgeon general, chief of the Bureau of Medical Services, declared that "for the first time in the history of mankind, we feel we can now say to the person who has leprosy: there is hope." The American Mission to Lepers, an interdenominational agency of Protestant Churches, aids 125 leprosy stations, clinics, and colonies in 29 countries, providing food, clothing, buildings, and general maintenance for these stations. It provides funds for religious work in these colonies, maintains homes for infected children and healthy children of infected parents. It carries on a general education programme in support of improved care and treatment of leprosy victims.

Experiments with the use of sulfa drugs in the treatment of leprosy are proving successful, declared Dr. Williams. Two sulfa derivatives, diasons and promin, have now been in use over a five year period with patients at the United States Leprosarium at Carville, La. Where from ten to twelve patients were hitherto released annually as symptom-free, between 30 and 35 are now being discharged. Beneficial results in the treatment of sulfa drugs are now being confirmed in other countries.

E.P.S. Geneva

UNITED STATESDr Cavert Stresses on Christian Unity

Dr Samuel McCrea Cavert, General Secretary of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, told a special meeting of the House of Bishops of the Protestant Episcopal Church in Winston-Salem, N.C., on November 5, that the need for Christian unity has never been more pressing. He described the ecumenical movement as the "effort of Christians to translate their prayer for unity into a living reality."

Speaking before 130 bishops from the United States and abroad, Dr Cavert declared that the desire for greater cooperation among most of the major Churches in the United States has resulted in the formation of interdenominational councils in 36 States and in 633 cities and countries. Function of these councils is to create "the ecclesiastical climate out of which union may some day come and to practice such unity as we already have."

Dr Cavert said that a council of Churches, whether existing at the local, national, or world level, got its significance from "its being the best, even though a partial, expression of the unity that is possible now". Living and working in a council of Churches, does not mean the "consummation of Christian unity, but it does mean moving in that direction. It means the achievement of as much unity as is possible within the framework of our inherited denominational systems."

Explaining that the World Council draws together both the Churches of the Reformation and those of the ancient Catholic Church, Dr Cavert said that the presence of Orthodox and Anglican bodies in the Council would remind other groups "that while they vigorously bear their Protestant witness they are also heirs of a Catholic heritage that comes down through 19 centuries."

As to the possibility that the Russian Orthodox Church may join the World Council, negotiations are still being carried on. Speaking of one aspect of this question Dr. Cavert said: "We have not given up hope that the Russian Church may become a member of the World Council and thus serve as a bridge of understanding between the peoples of that country and the United States." E.P.S. Geneva

SCOTLANDGerman Bishop Receives Edinburgh Degree

Early in November Sir John Fraser, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Edinburgh conferred the degree of Doctor of Divinity on the Right Rev. Dr. Hanns Lilje, Bishop of Hanover, Germany. Students attended the ceremony, and the Rev. Dr. Hugh Watt, Dean of the Faculty of Divinity, paying tribute to Bishop Lilje's scholarship and to his courageous Christian witness under the Nazi regime recalled his great work for world friendship as General Secretary of the Student Christian Movement in pre-war Germany and as Secretary of the World Lutheran Alliance (now World Lutheran Federation).

Bishop Lilje expressed thanks on behalf of himself and his fellow-countrymen for the "really generous gesture", which, coming as it did from a faculty of a nation with which up to that time they had not yet official peace, showed the magnificent disregard of Christians for the divisions among men.

On November 9, the Sunday before Armistice Day, Bishop Lilje preached the sermon at the Cathedral of St. Giles, Edinburgh. E.P.S. Geneva

GERMANYHostility to the Church Regarded as Politically Detrimental?

"In the practice of the Courts of Justice the question of the attitude of a person to the Church often receives attention which is not in complete harmony with the basic principle of tolerance towards religious convictions." This declaration was recently sent by the Evangelical Church Council in Stuttgart to the Württemberg Ministry for Political Liberation, together with a request to inform the public prosecutors and Courts of Justice that "if any person's attitude was unfriendly to the Christian Church, that in itself could not be regarded as a matter carrying political weight."

Already before the Third Reich (so runs the declaration of the Church Council) hostility to Christianity had become apparent in politically radical circles. "State measures directed against religious convictions are detrimental both to the State and to the religious community" which appears to be favoured or protected thereby. The declaration of the Church Council therefore recommends tolerance in these things, "so that the Church may not be suspected of wanting to draw people into itself, or to keep them there, by unspiritual means or by exploiting the political situation." E.P.S. Geneva

GERMANYForms of Church Activity Recognised by the Russians

The Soviet Military authorities have ordered the heads of the Evangelical Church of Berlin-Brandenburg to hand them a record of all their organisations. The object of a review of this kind was to avoid requesting (through

ignorance or misunderstanding) the registration of organisations which come under the jurisdiction of the Church. The new register gives a broad picture of the scope of church work. It includes nine groups of church activities: church services, Bible classes, Foreign Missions, Home Missions, the Gustav-Adolf Work, the Evangelical League, the Evangelical Women's Movement, the Evangelical Men's Movement, the Evangelical Youth Groups, Evangelical "Hilfs-werk", instruction for young people, church administration, public activities, publications and finally official news and dispositions. It is not necessary to register all the above-mentioned activities and organisations separately, as they are all considered as publicly recognised organisations. E.P.S. Geneva

INDIA

Church Union in North India

In an article entitled "Church Union in North India" (The Guardian, Madras, September 25, 1947) Dr A. Ralla Ram, Moderator of the United Church of Northern India, reports on a meeting of the Round Table Conference on Church Union in North India held at Allahabad and writes:

"In this great enterprise of the Kingdom four large sections of the Church universal have been taking counsel together in order to bring about organic union, namely the Church of India, Burma and Ceylon (Anglican), the Methodist Church of Southern Asia, the Methodist Church (British and Australasian Conferences), and the United Church of Northern India (Presbyterian)...

"It is very gratifying to note that in spite of slow progress the sustained efforts during the last two decades have achieved a great deal in the way of reaching a common mind on a number of fundamental matters, vital to union... Over against the situation in South India we in the North have made two matters our supreme concern. Firstly, we are desirous that the Ministry should be completely unified from the very start and that we should not differentiate between one type of ministry over against another, and secondly that the two types of Episcopacy as practised according to the Anglican and Methodist traditions be blended into one type of episcopacy in the uniting Churches." Two of the uniting Churches have already bishops. "These present bishops should receive from each other through prayer additional authority and grace by the laying on of hands, looking up unto God who alone gives us His blessing in answer to the prayers of the Church. Once our bishops have thus been installed we can proceed with the consecration of additional bishops through the laying on of hands in prayer of these our Fathers in God.

"The second problem is the unification of the ministry. After the Church has acknowledged and received its first bishops, in each area there should be held special services of supplemental ordination for the ministers in which authorities of all the uniting Churches should take part and when the hands are laid the following words, or closely similar to them, be used with prayer:

'Receive the Holy Ghost for the fuller exercise of Christ's ministry and priesthood in the Church of God; and for a wider and more effectual service therein take thou authority to preach the Word of God to fulfil the ministry of reconciliation and to minister Christ's Sacraments in the congrega-

tion where unto thou shalt be further called or regularly appointed. And see that thou do all these things in brotherly partnership with God's fellow-workers whom in this union of Churches He has made thine'.

"These words 'fuller exercise of Christ's ministry' and 'wider and more effectual service' make it clear beyond the shadow of a doubt that no ordination de novo is implied. What is clearly meant is that the ministries which have been truly blessed of God in separated sections of the Church may be richer, fuller and more effectual in the united Church, and by laying on of hands we pray to God that He may be pleased to give this grace and authority of which He alone is the Giver..."

E.P.S. Geneva

"Voluntary Prisoners of War"

Thirty-three German pastors from the British, American and Russian zones, are waiting to receive their marching orders to go and relieve an equal number of pastors who are prisoners of war in Great Britain. Each case has been examined separately by the competent authorities and it is hoped that these "voluntary prisoners" will be able to take up their duties at the New Year.

The Chancellery of the German Evangelical Church has organised in each of the interested zones a meeting of future P.W.s chaplains of the district, to help them to prepare themselves for their new ministry which will continue until all the prisoners are repatriated. A second list of 20 pastors who are also destined for Great Britain is still under examination.

The Chancellery of the Evangelical Church has furthermore been requested to send 25 volunteer pastors for the prisoner of war camps in France, because the number of pastors there is now inadequate owing to the repatriations which have taken place.

E.P.S. Geneva

UNITED STATES

"Froncon" Conference

A Student Volunteer Movement Conference will be held at Kansas University from December 27 to January 1st. This conference is bringing together professional church workers and lay Christians from the frontiers of the world. It is called "Froncon". It will be dealing with questions such as : what are the needs of the world, what are the Christian resources which can, must be, matched against these needs.

Representative church leader from North America and other countries, will describe the work of the Church in the present world situation. Each day the different groups will ask "What is the meaning of the Christian faith in the light of these conditions? What are the individual and group responsibilities of Christians? What does it mean to be a Christian pioneer?"

"Froncon" is a student movement conference. Administration is committed to the Student Volunteer Movement. Selection of delegates is being made by the Student Christian Movements, the Student YMCA and YWCA, the Student Christian Movements, and the church related Student Christian movements.

E.P.S. Geneva

UNITED STATESDeath of Dr Robert Elliot Speer

From America comes the news that Dr Robert Speer had died in his eightieth year. As a layman he rendered great service to the extension and deepening of American Protestantism. He was one of the spiritual leaders of America. For many years Dr Speer was in charge of the mission work of the Presbyterian Church, and later on became its Moderator. He was also President of the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America. He was a pioneer in the Student Volunteer Movement of the United States. E.P.S. Geneva

HUNGARYBishop Ordass among the Workers of Budapest

The Protestant newspaper "Uj Harangszo" of November 23, 1947, publishes a report on a meeting in Csepel, an industrial suburb of Budapest, at which the Lutheran Bishop L. Ordass, with many of his congregation, a Roman Catholic priest Dr Kalman Ag, the factory-workers, a Communist member of Parliament Ludwig Drahos, and representatives of the local authorities took part.

The meeting has been called in order to dedicate a damaged Lutheran church, in the restoration of which the Churches abroad and especially the working-people of Csepel cooperated with great self-sacrifice. The wall round the Church was the gift of members of the Communist Party, while a church-candlestick was presented by members of the Social-Democratic Party.

In his opening speech the Church Inspector of Csepel explained that within the precincts of this church the spirit of peace, friendship and love of one's neighbour will be fostered and broadened by practical helpfulness. The Roman Catholic priest seized upon this and said: "Let us work together. Let us go hand in hand and lead everyone into the right path, which we must also take ourselves..."

The Communist M.P. then said: "Referring to the sermon given by Bishop Ordass, we will not only speak, we will also act. I agree with this basis suggested by the Bishop. We must help suffering humanity and for this purpose we can in many cases cooperate..."

Bishop Ordass thanked his hearers for the cooperation between Protestants and Catholics and expressed his thanks to the heads of the state administration and to the labour parties for their helpful words and action. "The church of Csepel is a proof of what it means when people shake hands sincerely and without reservation. That is the basic provision, without which there is no security... What has happened in Csepel could happen on a large scale all over Hungary, because what has been achieved here is not due to the gifts of the wealthy but to the sacrifice of the poor..." E.P.S. Geneva

Latest Developments of the World's Y.W.C.A.

During a time of civil war in China and of general political unrest throughout the country, the World's Young Women's Christian Association succeeded in carrying through its Council Meeting, which terminated recently in Hangshow (see E.P.S.No. 36).

One of the main emphases of the meeting was on Leadership Training. In this connection plans were made for setting up international training institutes in Geneva and other parts of the world for the study of international issues, ecumenical questions, and problems of mutual concern on the international level. It was proposed they should be about three months in duration and attended by key-leaders of national Y.W.C.A. movements. It was also proposed that international conferences of membership groups such as professional and business women, industrial women and students be sponsored by the World's Y.W.C.A.

Other outcomes of the Council meeting were: (1) National Associations were urged to increase their work in rural areas; (2) It was agreed that closer collaboration with the Y.M.C.A. in many fields was desirable and means of achieving this are to be explored. It was decided to continue the work among Displaced Persons in Central Europe, in collaboration with the World Y.M.C.A.s. Emphasis was also placed on the responsibility of national Y.W.C.A. movements in certain countries to create public opinion towards increasing immigration quotas to provide for the admission of larger numbers of refugees. The Council also re-affirmed the responsibility of the Y.W.C.A. to assist in the reception of Displaced Persons, particularly women and girls, when they arrive in new countries, and to plan for their integration in the life of local communities as normal citizens of society. E.P.S. Geneva

AUSTRIA

The General Synods

From October 21-24 a Conference was held in Vienna of the General Synods of the Lutheran and Reformed Church of Austria. The "Church Messenger for Evangelical-Lutheran Vienna" (November 1947) reports on it as follows: (see also E.P.S. No. 41)

"According to the Church Constitution at present in force, which is based on the Protestant Patent granted by the Emperor Francis Joseph I in 1861, the General Synod is the representative of the whole Church, and its legislative body.

The October conference was the first session of the General Synod, which will probably meet again in May for a second session. It will have to deal with some decisive tasks, such as the discussions and decisions concerning a new church constitution, the so-called "pastoral law" and an order of discipline. Drafts of all these measures have been placed before the High Church Council, and will be discussed during the coming weeks and months in the presbyteries and the meetings of Senior Councils and Superintendents, so that a well-considered draft may be placed before the General Synod for its final decision.

The most important task of this session was the discussion of the draft for a revision of the Protestant Patent. The General Synods sent deputations to the President, to the Mayor of Vienna and to the Minister of Education. The deputation was able to place the wishes of the Evangelical Churches before the members of the Government. They met with a friendly reception everywhere and were assured of understanding and help. E.P.S. Geneva

